

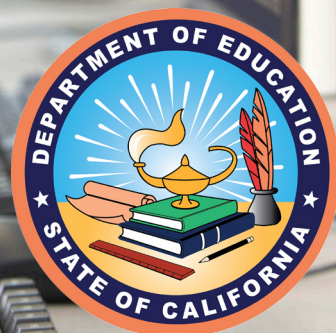


California Assessment of
Student Performance and Progress

Grades
3•4•5

Parent Guide to the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments

Overview and Sample Questions



California Department of Education



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Introduction

The purpose of this guide is to provide information about the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments, including sample test items for English language arts/literacy (ELA) and mathematics. This information will help parents better understand their children's test results. The Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments are part of the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) System, which replaces the previous Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program.

Every spring, students in grades three through eight and grade eleven take the **Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments** for ELA and mathematics. Results from these assessments are just one piece of information to help teachers, parents/guardians, and students understand how well a student is meeting the grade-level standards.

The Smarter Balanced System includes additional resources to improve teaching and learning. These resources include formative assessment tools and interim assessments. **Formative assessment** is a process that teachers use every day to check on student understanding. It includes a variety of informal and formal strategies to help both teachers and students assess what students are learning. This information can then be used by both teachers and students to decide what they must do next or differently to help students learn the material they have not learned.

From time to time, teachers may also give tests to check how well students have learned the material they have been taught **over a period of time** and what may need to be reviewed or retaught. These types of tests, called **interim assessments**, may be given at the end of a few days (such as a mathematics quiz or a spelling test), after a unit of instruction (such as a chapter test or unit writing assignment), or after a few weeks (such as a quarterly test). More information about the Smarter Balanced Interim Assessments is available on the CDE's Interim Assessments Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sa/sbacinterimassess.asp>.

A glossary of important terms used in this handbook is provided at the end.

Information on other assessments in the CAASPP System, as well links to important resources and sample responses to a constructed response item, are provided in the appendixes of this guide.

How the Online Smarter Balanced Assessments Are Different from Previous California Tests

The new Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments are very different from the old STAR tests in several ways:

- They are aligned with California’s new content standards for ELA and mathematics.
- They reflect the critical thinking and problem solving skills that students will need to be ready for college and the 21st century job market.
- They are taken on a computer and are adaptive, which means that during the test, the questions will become more or less difficult on the basis of how the student performs. If the student answers a question correctly, the next question may be a bit more challenging; if the student answers it incorrectly, the next question may be less difficult.
- They provide many more supports for students who need them, including students learning English and students with disabilities, as described in the section below.

Accessibility Supports and Accommodations

The computer-based Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments provide all students with greater flexibility than traditional pencil-paper tests. For example, students can increase the size of an image using the “Zoom In” option or highlight key words as they read a passage. Additional accessibility supports also are available for English learners and students with individualized education programs (IEPs) or Section 504 plans. For example, some students may access translations or American sign language.

For more information, please see the CDE Student Assessment Accessibility Supports Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/ca/accesssupport.asp>.

Item and Task Types

The Smarter Balanced assessment system includes a variety of item types, including:

- Selected-response items, which prompt students to choose one or more answers.
- Technology-enhanced items, which might prompt students to edit text or draw an object.
- Constructed-response items, which prompt students to write a short written or numerical response.
- Performance tasks, in which students engage in a complex set of tasks to demonstrate their understanding. (Students may be asked to conduct research and then write an argumentative essay, using sources as evidence. Or they may be asked to solve a complex problem in mathematics. Performance tasks integrate knowledge and skills across many areas and standards.)

Parents can take the Practice Test to see the different types of questions that students will be given on the Smarter Balanced Assessments. The Practice Test is posted on the CAASPP.org portal Practice and Training Tests Web page at <http://www.caaspp.org/practice-and-training/index.html>.

How Student Performance Is Reported on the Smarter Balanced Assessments

Student performance is reported in several ways, as explained below.

Overall Score and Achievement Level

For each grade level and subject area, students receive a score from approximately 2000 to 3000. The overall score falls into one of four achievement levels:

- **Standard Exceeded:** The student has exceeded the achievement standard and demonstrates advanced progress toward mastery of the knowledge and skills needed for likely success in future coursework.
- **Standard Met:** The student has met the achievement standard and demonstrates progress toward mastery of the knowledge and skills needed for likely success in future coursework.
- **Standard Nearly Met:** The student has nearly met the achievement standard and may require further development to demonstrate the knowledge and skills needed for likely success in future coursework.
- **Standard Not Met:** The student has not met the achievement standard and needs substantial improvement to demonstrate the knowledge and skills needed for likely success in future coursework.

See the CDE's Smarter Balanced Scale Score Ranges Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/ca/sbscalerange.asp>.

Area Achievement

The test reports show how a student performed in key areas, also called **claims**, in ELA and mathematics.

- **ELA Areas:** Reading, Writing, Listening, and Research/Inquiry
- **Mathematics Areas:** Problem Solving & Modeling/Data Analysis, Concepts & Procedures, and Communicating Reasoning

For each area, a student’s performance is represented as “**Above Standard,**” “**Near Standard,**” or “**Below Standard.**”

A sample student score report is provided on the CDE’s CAASPP Student Score Report Information Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/ca/caasppssrinfo.asp>.

The CDE video *Understanding Your Child’s Score Report* is posted on the CAASPP Student Score Report Information Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/ca/caasppssrinfo.asp>. This video describes and explains the CAASPP Student Score Report. A Spanish version of the video is available on this site.

Although the results of the state tests are important, they are just one way to assess the progress of students. Students and parents should review the test results in combination with report cards, class assignment grades, and teacher feedback.





How Reports are Used

Results from the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments provide one piece of information about a student’s academic performance that can:

- Help facilitate conversations between parents/guardians and teachers about student performance.
- Serve as a tool to help parents/guardians and teachers work together to improve student learning.
- Help schools and school districts identify strengths and areas that need improvement in their educational programs.
- Provide the public and policymakers with information about student achievement.

Student Performance in English Language Arts/Literacy

The Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments for ELA are organized by four areas, or claims.

ELA Areas (Claims) For Grades Three, Four, and Five		
	Reading	Demonstrating understanding of literary and nonfiction texts
	Writing	Producing clear and purposeful writing
	Listening	Demonstrating effective communication skills
	Research/Inquiry	Investigating, analyzing and presenting information

For more information, see the Smarter Balanced Assessments Web page at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments/>.

Grade Three ELA

In grade three, students build important **reading, writing, listening, and research skills**. They think, talk, and write about what they read in a variety of articles, books, and other texts. In their writing, students pay more attention to **organizing information, developing main ideas, and supporting these ideas with facts, details, and reasons**. They develop listening skills and participate in class discussions by sharing their ideas and building on the ideas of others.

For more information, see the *Parent Roadmap—Supporting Your Child in Grade Three, English Language Arts*, which is posted on the Council of the Great City Schools Web page at <http://www.cgcs.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&ModuleInstanceID=416&ViewID=7b97f7ed-8e5e-4120-848f-a8b4987d588f&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=719&PageID=330>.

A Spanish version of the publication is available on the same Web page at <http://www.cgcs.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&ModuleInstanceID=427&ViewID=7b97f7ed-8e5e-4120-848f-a8b4987d588f&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=729&PageID=365>.

Grade Three Sample Test Items for ELA

This section provides sample ELA test items for grade three.

Notes About Sample Test Items

The test items that students see online appear and function differently than the sample items shown in this document. For example, students may be asked to “drag,” “select,” or “click” their response. Parents can experience these different functionalities on the Training Test available on the CAASPP.org portal Practice and Training Tests Web page at <http://www.caaspp.org/practice-and-training/index.html>.

The sample test items presented in this guide represent the kinds of passages and questions that grade three students at different levels of achievement would likely answer correctly. For example, a student at the “Standard Met” achievement level would typically receive and correctly answer an item associated with that achievement level.

Please note that these sample items represent only a few of the standards that are assessed on the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments for ELA. (An online version of the sample items is in development.)

For each sample test item, the following information is included:

- ELA area for the item
- ELA state standard(s) that the item measures
- Correct answer(s)

Grade Three Sample Test Item—Listening

Achievement Level: Standard Met

Birds' Nest Safari (Excerpt from *Birds' Nest Safari* by Judyann Grant. Copyright Highlights Magazine. Reprinted with permission of Highlights for Children.) Listen to the presentation. Then answer the questions.

Please note that the following text would not appear on the actual test. Since this is a listening item, the text would be recorded, and students would listen to a recording of the text.

In this presentation, you will hear a speaker talk about birds' nests. Listen to the presentation and then answer the questions that follow.

A good time to spot birds' nests is after the leaves have fallen and the birds have gone. Many times, you can tell which kind of bird made a nest. To do that, notice where you see the nest, the shape of the nest, and what things were used to build it.

You may not see nests the first time out. Don't give up. Some birds hide their nests to keep their babies safe. With patience and practice, you will spot their nests.

House wrens build their nests in small hollowed-out places. They are not too choosy about where they build. They have even used old boots and the pockets of scarecrows' shirts.

Gray catbirds prefer to build in briar patches and other thickets. Their nests are loosely made of weed stalks, leaves, and twigs. These birds use strips of grapevine bark inside their deeply cupped "cradle."

The orioles' pouch-nest is one of the easiest to spot. It looks like a bag swinging at the end of a branch. The slightest breeze sends it swaying.

In a notebook, write down each place and tree where you spotted a nest. Draw a picture of it. In the spring, you can note which birds return to build new nests.

Excerpt from *Birds' Nest Safari* by Judyann Grant. Copyright Highlights Magazine. Reprinted with permission of Highlights for Children.

Grade Three Sample Test Item—Listening Achievement Level: Standard Met (continued)

What does the speaker hope the listener will learn from the presentation? Pick **two** choices.

- A. how to find birds' nests
- B. how to build birds' nests
- C. how to draw birds' nests
- D. how to tell birds' nests apart
- E. how to keep birds' nests safe

Area

Listening

Demonstrating effective communication skills

Standard(s)

Determine the main ideas and supporting details of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

Answer

A (how to find birds' nests) and D (how to tell birds' nests apart)

Note: Students must identify both A and D to receive the full point. There is no partial credit on selected response (i.e., multiple choice) items.

Grade Three Sample Test Item—Reading Achievement Level: Standard Exceeded

Read the poem and answer the questions.

Waiting for Change

The dirt is cool, still dark and damp
from yesterday's rain. The seed
in my hand looks like a period at the end
of a sentence, but unlike the period,
this seed is the beginning of something grand.

I push the seed into the soil.
Later I scrub my hands and nails,
soap bubbling up in the sink
like the tiny bubbles of water
at the bottom of a waterfall.

Each morning before school,
I look at the corner of the garden
where I planted the seed,
but to my eye nothing has changed.
I think of how the television looks
when it is off—dark and sitting quietly.
I know there is a whole world inside both
the TV and the seed waiting to present itself.

Light rain begins to fall as I drift off to sleep,
reminding myself I must be patient.
I imagine the rain might awaken
whatever is inside the seed I planted.
But in the morning, there is still no sign,
just little impressions left in the ground by the rain.

Grade Three Sample Test Item—Reading Achievement Level: Standard Exceeded (continued)

I wait and watch for one whole week,
but nothing happens.
I've decided that maybe the seed was planted
too deeply in the ground. I begin to think
the seed has lost its way, just
like my dad when he took one wrong turn
and ended up in a place unknown.

And then, on the day I'm ready to give up—
the seed begins to sprout! The plant rises above the earth,
and by the afternoon it has stretched its leaves,
ready to grow throughout the season.

How does the speaker change from stanza 5 to stanza 6?

- A. The speaker is puzzled, and then the speaker feels foolish.
- B. The speaker is watchful, and then the speaker gives up.
- C. The speaker is worried, and then the speaker is pleased.
- D. The speaker is angry, and then the speaker is surprised.

Area

Reading

Demonstrating understanding of literary and nonfiction texts

Standard(s)

Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.

Answer

C

Grade Three Sample Test Item—Reading Achievement Level: Standard Exceeded

This next question is also based on the poem, “Waiting for Change,” on pages 11 and 12. The question has two parts. First, answer part A. Then, answer part B.

Part A

Click on the sentence that **best** explains what the use of the character’s actions shows about the relationship between the speaker and the events in the poem.

- A. The events change the speaker.
- B. The events follow a mistake made by the speaker.
- C. The events would have happened without the speaker.
- D. The events happen because of the actions of the speaker.

Part B

Click on the line from the poem that **best** illustrates the relationship made in part A.

this seed is the beginning of something grand.
I push the seed into the soil.
Later I scrub my hands and nails,
I look at the corner of the garden
but to my eye nothing has changed.
Light rain begins to fall as I drift off to sleep,
the seed begins to sprout! The plant rises above the
earth,

Area

Reading

Demonstrating understanding of literary and nonfiction texts

Standard(s)

Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.

Answer

Part A: D
Part B: The line, “I push the seed into the soil.”

Grade Three Sample Test Item—Reading Achievement Level: Standard Exceeded

Read the text and answer the question.

Digging into the Past

Imagine you are digging in a garden or walking across a field. You find a stone arrowhead or an old broken pot. These objects could be clues to how people lived long ago.

Studying the Past

The study of human life in the past is called archaeology. Scientists who study people who lived long ago are called archaeologists. Old tools, bones, and buildings are clues to how people lived.

Archaeologists look for places where early humans lived, hunted, farmed, or gathered food. They learn about the people by studying the objects that were used in the past. They can discover how people lived and worked. They can find out what people wore and what they ate.

Finding the Clues

Finding a place where people may have lived long ago is only the first step. Finding the clues to how people lived requires careful study. The objects people used may be buried. Because archaeologists dig into the ground to look for clues, the site is called a dig. A dig could be in a cave, a forest, a desert, or a modern city.

At a dig, archaeologists divide the ground into sections. Then, they carefully remove dirt from each section. They use special tools such as small shovels and brushes. Each section must be searched slowly. If a tool or piece of pottery is found, it is photographed and notes are taken before it is carefully removed from the ground. These objects are called artifacts. An artifact can help explain how people lived in the past.

Grade Three Sample Test Item—Reading

Achievement Level: Standard Exceeded (continued)

Knowing Where to Dig

Places for digs can be discovered by accident. Someone plowing a field might discover a bone or a tool. Archaeologists would go to the site and decide if it was a good place for a dig. Artifacts are sometimes found when a building is being constructed. Then work is stopped. Archaeologists and others are given a chance to study the site before construction continues.

In recent years, archaeologists have found other ways to decide where to dig. They read old texts. The writings may provide clues to where people lived. They use satellites to study large areas of land. Computers can also help. Models of what ancient towns might have looked like can be created. These new methods give archaeologists ideas about where to dig.

If archaeologists think artifacts are present, they do a survey, or study of an area. They look for anything that shows that people may have lived there. They look for the remains of old buildings. These could include houses or huts. They also use tools to help find metal objects that are buried. A survey helps them decide if an area should become a dig.

What Archaeology Teaches Us

Archaeology helps us understand the past. Putting together a story about the past is like doing a big puzzle. The problem is we don't have a box lid to show what the completed picture should look like. Artifacts are some of the pieces, but they are only part of the big picture. Artifacts are taken back to a lab and studied closely. Then archaeologists put together pieces of the past.

Most of human history is not written down. Sometimes, even written history is an incomplete story. We are left to find out the rest. So archaeology is important. It is how we learn about people and the ways they used to live. Archaeologists try to answer questions. They might try to find out what jobs people had or what families did for fun. The answers teach us about history.

Grade Three Sample Test Item—Reading Achievement Level: Standard Exceeded (continued)

What is the main idea of the **Finding the Clues** section?
Use details from the passage to support your answer.

Area**Reading**

Demonstrating understanding of literary and nonfiction texts

Standard(s)

Determine the main idea of a text; recount the key details and explain how they support the main idea.

Answer

Constructed response: Students write a short response, identifying the main idea of the section and support their answers with specific details from the text. A scoring rubric and sample responses for this item appear in **Appendix C**.

Grade Four ELA

In grade four, students continue to build important **reading, writing, listening, and research skills**. They read more **challenging** literature, articles, and other sources of information and continue to grow their vocabulary. They are also expected to **clearly explain in detail** what they have read **by referring to details or information from the text**. In writing, students organize their ideas and develop topics with **reasons, facts, details**, and other information.

For more information, please see the *Parent Roadmap—Supporting Your Child in Grade Four, English Language Arts*, which is posted on the Council of the Great City Schools Web page at <http://www.cgcs.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&ModuleInstanceID=416&ViewID=7b97f7ed-8e5e-4120-848f-a8b4987d588f&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=720&PageID=330>.

A Spanish version of the publication is available on the same Web page at <http://www.cgcs.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&ModuleInstanceID=427&ViewID=7b97f7ed-8e5e-4120-848f-a8b4987d588f&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=730&PageID=365>.

Grade Four Sample Test Items for ELA

The sample test items that follow represent the kinds of passages and questions that grade four students at different levels of achievement would likely answer correctly. For example, a student at the “Standard Nearly Met” achievement level would typically receive and correctly answer an item associated with that achievement level.

Grade Four Sample Test Item—Reading

Achievement Level: Standard Nearly Met

A Pleasant Home

from *The Tale of Rusty Wren*

by Arthur Scott Bailey

Now, Rusty Wren had found—and shown to his wife—a hollow apple tree and a hole in a fence rail, either of which he thought would make a pleasant place in which to live.

But since the little couple were house wrens, Rusty's wife said she thought that they shouldn't be so far from the farmhouse.

"Why not build our nest behind one of the shutters?" she suggested. But Rusty shook his head quickly—and with decision.

"That won't do," said he. "Somebody might come to the window and close the shutter; and then our nest would fall to the ground. And if we happened to have six or eight eggs in it, you know you wouldn't like that very well."

Rusty's wife agreed with him on that point. But she still insisted that she wanted to live near the farmhouse. She said that she expected her husband to find a good spot for their nest, for she certainly wasn't going to spend the summer in a hole in a fence rail, or in an old apple tree, either. Rusty Wren saw at once that there was no sense in arguing with her. If he wanted any peace, he knew that he might as well forget the old hollow apple tree and the hole in the fence rail too. He had better forget them and resume his search for a home. So he gave his plump little cinnamon-colored body a shake and held his tail at even a higher angle than usual. He did this to show people that he was going to be proud of his house—when they should have one. Then with a jerk of his short, round wings, he hurried over to Farmer Green's yard—after calling to his wife that he would come back and tell her if he had any luck.

Rusty Wren spent some busy moments about Farmer Green's buildings. And since he loved to be busy and was never so happy as when he had something important to do, he hopped and climbed and fluttered to his heart's content, looking into a hundred different holes and cracks and crannies.

Grade Four Sample Test Item—Reading
Achievement Level: Standard Nearly Met (continued)

But he didn't find a single one that suited him. Every place into which he peered was either too big or too little, or too high or too low; or it was where the rain would beat upon it; or maybe it was so situated that the cat could thrust her paw inside. Anyhow, every possible nook for a nest had some drawback. And Rusty was wondering what he could say to his wife, who was sure to be upset if her plans went wrong, when all at once he came upon the finest place for a house that he had ever seen. One quick look through the small round opening that led to it was enough.

He knew right away that his search was ended. So he hurried back to the orchard to find Mrs. Rusty and tell her the good news.

"I've found the best spot for a house in all Pleasant Valley!" he cried, as he dropped down beside her and hopped about in his excitement.

"Is it in a good neighborhood?" she inquired calmly.

"Yes, indeed!" he replied. "It's in a tree close to Farmer Green's bedroom window."

"A hole in a tree!" she exclaimed somewhat doubtfully. "Not an old squirrel's nest, I hope?"

"No, no!" he assured her. "It's not really in a tree. It's nailed to a tree. Come with me and I'll show you."

At that the bustling little pair hastened toward the farmhouse. And, to Rusty's delight, the moment his wife saw what he had found she said at once that it was exactly the sort of house she had always hoped to have, some time.

"A Pleasant Home" from *The Tale of Rusty Wren* by Arthur Scott Bailey. In the public domain.

Grade Four Sample Test Item—Reading Achievement Level: Standard Nearly Met (continued)

First, read the dictionary definition. Then, read the directions that follow.

(v) **1.** moved or acted quickly

Click on the underlined word from the paragraphs that **most closely** matches the definition.

“No, no!” he assured her. “It’s not really in a tree. It’s nailed to a tree. Come with me and I’ll show you.”

At that the bustling little pair hastened toward the farmhouse. And, to Rusty’s delight, the moment his wife saw what he had found she said at once that it was exactly the sort of house she had always hoped to have, some time.

Area

Reading

Demonstrating understanding of literary and nonfiction texts

Standard(s)

Word Meanings:

Determine intended meanings of words, including words with multiple meanings (academic/tier 2 words), based on context, word relationships (e.g., synonyms), word structure (e.g., common Greek or Latin roots, affixes), or use of resources (e.g., dictionary, thesaurus).

Answer

hastened

Grade Four Sample Test Item—Reading

Achievement Level: Standard Exceeded

What a Yawn from Ask Magazine

Want to know who is looking at you in a crowd? Try this: Pretend to yawn. Open your mouth really wide, and scrunch up your eyes. For added drama, you might stretch. Then look around. Anyone else yawning? If they are, they were probably watching you. Yawning is so contagious that one person yawning will make others do the same.

Yawning is really a six-second mystery, from the opening to the closing of your mouth. Humans and all other mammals do it, and so do some fish and reptiles. Birds do it. Eleven-week-old unborn human babies do it. But no one really knows why.

Pay Attention When I Yawn at You

Most people believe that we yawn because we are tired, which is partly true. But scientists have other theories too.

In apes and monkeys, yawning by the leader of the group may signal that it's time for a change in the group's activity: "YAWN ... It's time for us all to go to sleep," or "YAWN ... It's time to hunt." Once the leader yawns, everyone else in the pack yawns back, signaling that they understand. (A big yawn also gives the leader a chance to show off his long, sharp teeth and remind young upstarts not to bother him while he is sleeping.)

Perhaps yawning is your body's way of telling you it's time for a change. Think about when you yawn. As you wake up, you might stretch and yawn. Your body is ready to do something besides sleep. You might yawn at bedtime, preparing yourself for dreamland. Sometimes, if you've had a long day at school, you yawn during class. Your body is really ready for a change then.

Some scientists believe that yawning is also a way of keeping the brain alert. If you are bored or drowsy, but you know you have to read one more chapter, yawning increases blood flow to the brain to stimulate it. Prior to big competitions, athletes yawn a lot, and dogs under pressure to perform will yawn over and over. Even Siamese fighting fish yawn before they attack. When it's time to be alert, the brain sends out chemical signals, and before you know it, you are yawning.

Grade Four Sample Test Item—Reading

Achievement Level: Standard Exceeded (continued)

Catching the Yawns

And yes, yawning is contagious, though experts are not certain why. It may have something to do with those monkeys who yawn at each other to coordinate activities. Humans don't yawn for that reason, but yawning still has the same effect. When someone in the room yawns, nearly everyone else will, too.

Even just thinking about it can trigger a yawn. We won't take it personally if you yawned several times while reading this article. Perhaps your body needs a change.

"What a Yawn!" by the staff of *Ask* magazine. Copyright © 2004 by Carus Publishing. Reprinted by permission of Carus Publishing.

Select the **three** sentences that should be included in a summary of the passage.

- A. Yawning in class is a common occurrence.
- B. Even reading about yawning can cause a person to yawn.
- C. Scientists are unsure why people yawn, but have developed a few theories.
- D. Both animals and humans yawn when they are preparing to switch activities.
- E. Yawns often occur when people or animals are preparing for an event which requires alertness.
- F. When an ape leader yawns, it gives him a chance to frighten the younger apes by showing his long, pointed teeth.

Area	Reading
	Demonstrating understanding of literary and nonfiction texts
Standard(s)	Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.
Answer	C; D; E

Grade Five ELA

In grade five, students continue to read more challenging literature, articles, and other sources of information and continue to build their vocabulary. Students are also expected to understand and **clearly summarize what they have learned** from readings and classroom discussions, **referring to specific evidence and details from the text**. Students write regularly and continue to develop their ability to **gather, organize, interpret, and present information**.

For more information, please see the *Parent Roadmap—Supporting Your Child in Grade Five, English Language Arts*, which is posted on the Council of the Great City Schools Web page at <http://www.cgcs.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&ModuleInstanceID=416&ViewID=7b97f7ed-8e5e-4120-848f-a8b4987d588f&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=721&PageID=330>.

A Spanish version of the publication is available on the same Web page at <http://www.cgcs.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&ModuleInstanceID=427&ViewID=7b97f7ed-8e5e-4120-848f-a8b4987d588f&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=731&PageID=365>.

Grade Five Sample Test Items for ELA

The sample test items that follow represent the kinds of passages and questions that grade five students at different levels of achievement would likely answer correctly. For example, a student at the “Standard Nearly Met” achievement level would typically receive and correctly answer an item associated with that achievement level.

Grade Five Sample Test Item—Reading

Achievement Level: Standard Nearly Met

Read the sentences from the text.

I once watched a hummingbird do a really special aerial maneuver. It dived down through a small swarm of insects, then flew back up to dive through the swarm over and over again.

Which phrase **best** states the meaning of “aerial maneuver” in the text?

- A. a series of actions performed by the hummingbird while flying
- B. a series of actions performed by the hummingbird while hovering
- C. a series of beak movements that help hummingbirds catch insects
- D. a series of wing movements that help the hummingbird use energy skillfully

Area

Reading

Demonstrating understanding of literary and nonfiction texts

Standard(s)

Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a grade 5 topic or subject area.

Answer

A

Grade Five Sample Test Item—Reading

Achievement Level: Standard Exceeded

Snow Buggies

by Linda Crotta Brennan

Take a walk in the woods in winter. It may be cold and snowy, but at least there won't be any insects . . . or will there?

Insects are cold-blooded, which means their bodies stay the same temperature as the air around them. When it gets cold, an insect's organs and muscles get cold, too, and they don't work very well. In winter many insects enter a kind of hibernation called diapause. Some, like monarch butterflies, migrate south. Others stay under the earth or in water, where temperatures don't get below freezing. But there are some insects that are active even in the snow.

On a sunny winter day, check the snow covering near the south side of a tree. You may see a sprinkle of little black spots that look like pepper. If you watch carefully, you'll see the "pepper" jump. These energetic black spots are tiny insects called springtails or snow fleas.

Although people often call them snow fleas, they aren't really fleas, and they won't bite you or your pet. Entomologists, scientists who study insects, prefer to use the name "springtail." These beneficial insects eat decaying matter, like old leaves and plants, and turn it into dirt. Because springtails are so tiny, most people don't even know they exist, but they are the most common insect on land. There are millions of them in each acre of earth, busily enriching the soil.

Springtails get their name from two tiny prongs at the end of their bodies. These prongs are held down by hooks, and when the hooks let go, the insects spring three or four inches through the air.

There are many species of springtails. Some of them are aquatic, or live in water, while others can survive in the Antarctic and Arctic. In spring the golden snow flea forms a golden carpet on the snow in British Columbia. Other species

Grade Five Sample Test Item—Reading
Achievement Level: Standard Exceeded (continued)

are white, brown, green, blue, or red. Many, but not all, are active in the winter.

Sometimes groups of almost a million springtails make long migrations, trips of over 25 meters that can take two days to complete. The insects stay together in a round mass with the springtails on the surface hopping and the ones below crawling. At night, they all stop to rest under the leaf litter.

Springtails are considered primitive insects because they have neither wings nor compound eyes. And even though they molt, or shed their outer shell as they grow bigger, they don't go through a body change or metamorphosis as other insects do. They don't even have organs for breathing! Instead they get oxygen directly through their skin. Because the skin needs to be moist for oxygen exchange to occur, the springtails stay in wet places, such as a sunny spot where the snow is beginning to melt.

That warm sunny spot on the snow is called a microclimate, a small area with a different climate than the surrounding region. Because springtails are so tiny, they can live in a very small microclimate.

They also have two other adaptations that allow them to survive in the cold. First, springtails stop eating and empty their stomachs in very cold weather; otherwise, ice crystals might form around their food and kill them. They also produce special chemicals called cryoprotectants in their blood. These chemicals act like the antifreeze we put in our cars and prevent the springtails' blood from freezing.

So go ahead and take that winter walk in the woods. And be sure to watch for the springtails speckling the snow at the sunny base of a tree!

"Snow Buggies" by Linda Crotta Brennan, from Cricket magazine. Copyright © 1995 by Carus Publishing. Reprinted by permission of Carus Publishing.

Grade Five Sample Test Item—Reading Achievement Level: Standard Exceeded (continued)

The following question has two parts. First, answer part A. Then, answer part B.

Part A

Click on the statement that **best** provides an inference about why the author included information about insects in winter in paragraph 2.

- A. The author wanted readers to understand how winter affects insects.
- B. The author wanted readers to understand why animals hibernate or migrate.
- C. The author wanted readers to understand how springtails are different from other insects.
- D. The author wanted readers to understand the difference between warm-blooded and cold-blooded insects.

Part B

Click on the sentence from the text that **best** supports your answer in part A. Choose **one** option.

Insects are cold-blooded, which means their bodies stay the same temperature as the air around them. When it gets cold, an insect’s organs and muscles get cold, too, and they don’t work very well. In winter many insects enter a kind of hibernation called diapause. Some, like monarch butterflies, migrate south. Others stay under the earth or in water, where temperatures don’t get below freezing. But there are some insects that are active even in the snow.

Area

Reading

Demonstrating understanding of literary and nonfiction texts

Standard(s)

Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text, identifying which reasons and evidence support which point(s).

Answer

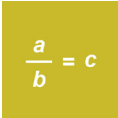
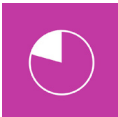

Part A: C

Part B: “But there are some insects that are active even in the snow.”

Note: Students must correctly answer both Part A and Part B in order to receive the point. There is no partial credit for answering just one part correctly.

Student Performance in Mathematics

The Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments for Mathematics are organized by areas, or **claims**.

Mathematics Areas (Claims) For Grades Three, Four, and Five		
	Concepts & Procedures	Applying mathematical concepts and procedures
	Problem Solving & Modeling/Data Analysis	Using appropriate tools and strategies to solve real world and mathematical problems
	Communicating Reasoning	Demonstrating ability to support mathematical conclusions

For more information, please see the Smarter Balanced Assessments Web page at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments/>.

Grade Three Mathematics

In grade three, students continue to **build their concept of numbers**, including developing an **understanding of fractions** as numbers. They learn the concepts behind multiplication and division and apply problem-solving skills and strategies for multiplying and dividing numbers up through 100 to solve word problems. Students also make connections between the concept of the area of a rectangle and multiplication and addition of whole numbers.

For more information, please see the *Parent Roadmap—Supporting Your Child in Grade Three, Mathematics*, which is posted on the Council of the Great City Schools Web page at <http://www.cgcs.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&ModuleInstanceID=429&ViewID=7b97f7ed-8e5e-4120-848f-a8b4987d588f&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=738&PageID=366>.

A Spanish version of the publication is available available on the same Web page <http://www.cgcs.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&ModuleInstanceID=431&ViewID=7b97f7ed-8e5e-4120-848f-a8b4987d588f&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=748&PageID=367>.

Grade Three Sample Test Items for Mathematics

This next section provides sample test items for grade three mathematics.

The test items that students see online appear and function differently than the sample items shown in this document. For example, students may be asked to “drag, select, or click” their response. Parents can experience these different functionalities on the CAASPP.org portal Practice and Training Tests Web page at <http://www.caaspp.org/practice-and-training/index.html>.

The sample test items presented here represent the kinds of questions that grade three students at different levels of achievement would likely answer correctly. For example, a student at the “Standard Met” achievement level would typically receive and correctly answer an item associated with that achievement level.

Please note that these sample items represent only a few of the standards that are assessed on the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments in mathematics. (An online version of the sample items is in development.)

For each sample test item, the following information is included:

- Mathematics area for the item
- Mathematics state standard(s) that the item measures
- Correct answer(s)

Grade Three Sample Test Item—Communicating Reasoning

Achievement Level: Standard Nearly Met

Drag a number into each box to make each statement true.
You may use numbers more than once.

0	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
1	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
2	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
3	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
4	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
5	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
6	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
7	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
8	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
9	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

0

$$\frac{\square}{5} > \frac{3}{5}$$

$$\frac{\square}{5} < \frac{3}{5}$$

$$\frac{\square}{5} = \frac{3}{5}$$

Area**Communicating Reasoning**

Demonstrating ability to support mathematical conclusions

Standard(s)

Explain equivalence of fractions in special cases, and compare fractions by reasoning about their size.

Answer

The following responses are possible for each fraction:

$4/5 > 3/5$; $5/5 > 3/5$;
 $6/5 > 3/5$; $7/5 > 3/5$;
 $8/5 > 3/5$; $9/5 > 3/5$

$0/5 < 3/5$; $1/5 < 3/5$;
 $2/5 < 3/5$

$3/5 = 3/5$

(2 points)

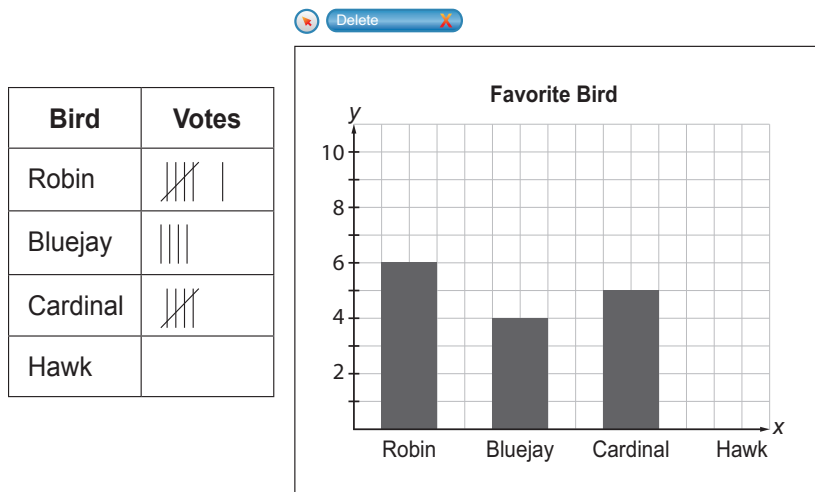
The student is able to complete all three comparisons correctly.

(1 point)

The student is able to complete 2 out of 3 comparisons correctly.

Grade Three Sample Test Item—Problem Solving & Modeling/Data Analysis Achievement Level: Standard Met

Mr. Lowe asked his students to vote for their favorite bird. A total of 22 students voted.



Click above Hawk on the graph to show the number of students who chose it as their favorite bird.

Area Problem Solving & Modeling/Data Analysis
Using appropriate tools and strategies to solve real world and mathematical problems

Standard(s) Draw a scaled picture graph and a scaled bar graph to represent a data set with several categories. Solve one- and two-step “how many more” and “how many less” problems using information presented scaled bar graphs.

Answer “Hawk” constructed to show 7 hawks.

Grade Three Sample Test Item—Problem Solving & Modeling/Data Analysis Achievement Level: Standard Exceeded

Joel is playing a number game.

- First, he subtracts 300 from a number.
- Then, he adds 25 to the new number.
- The number is a number less than 460.

Click Yes, if the number is one Joel could have started with.
Click No, if the number is one Joel could **not** have started with.

	Yes	No
736	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
734	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
738	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
732	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Area

Problem Solving & Modeling/Data Analysis

Using appropriate tools and strategies to solve real world and mathematical problems

Standard(s)

Fluently add and subtract within 1000 using strategies and algorithms based on place value, properties of operations, and/or the relationship between addition and subtraction.

Answer

736 no, 734 yes, 738 no, and 732 yes

Grade Four Mathematics

In grade four, students use **addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division to solve word problems**, including problems involving **measurement of volume, mass, and time**. Students continue to build their understanding of fractions—**creating equal fractions, comparing the size of fractions, adding and subtracting fractions, and multiplying fractions by whole numbers**. They also start to understand the **relationship between fractions and decimals**.

For more information, please see the *Parent Roadmap—Supporting Your Child in Grade Four, Mathematics* posted on the Council of the Great City Schools Web page at <http://www.cgcs.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&ModuleInstanceID=429&ViewID=7b97f7ed-8e5e-4120-848f-a8b4987d588f&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=737&PageID=366>.

A Spanish version of the publication is available on same Web page at <http://www.cgcs.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&ModuleInstanceID=431&ViewID=7b97f7ed-8e5e-4120-848f-a8b4987d588f&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=749&PageID=367>.

Grade Four Sample Test Items for Mathematics

The sample test items below represent the kinds of questions that grade four students at different levels of achievement would likely answer correctly. For example, a student at the “Standard Nearly Met” achievement level would typically receive and correctly answer an item associated with that achievement level.

Grade Four Sample Test Item—Communicating Reasoning

Achievement Level: Standard Met

Drag one number into each box to make each statement true. You may use numbers more than once.

3	Delete	
4		
5		
6		$\frac{1}{2} > \frac{\square}{\square}$
8		$\frac{1}{2} < \frac{\square}{\square}$
		$\frac{1}{2} = \frac{\square}{\square}$

Area**Communicating Reasoning**

Demonstrating ability to support mathematical conclusions

Standard(s)

Compare two fractions with different numerators and different denominators, e.g., by creating common denominators or numerators, or by comparing to a benchmark fraction such as $\frac{1}{2}$. Recognize that comparisons are valid only when the two fractions refer to the same whole. Record the results of comparisons with symbols $>$, $=$, or $<$, and justify the conclusions, e.g., by using a visual fraction model.

Answer

Answers may vary

Grade Five Mathematics

In grade five, students build their understanding of the **place value system** by working with **decimals up to the hundredths place**. Students also **add, subtract, and multiply fractions**, including fractions with unlike denominators. They continue to expand their geometry and measurement skills, learning the concept of volume and measuring the **volume of a solid figure**.

For more information, please see the *Parent Roadmap—Supporting Your Child in Grade Five, Mathematics* posted on the Council of the Great City Schools Web page at <http://www.cgcs.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&ModuleInstanceID=429&ViewID=7b97f7ed-8e5e-4120-848f-a8b4987d588f&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=736&PageID=366>.

A Spanish version of the publication is available on same Web page at <http://www.cgcs.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&ModuleInstanceID=431&ViewID=7b97f7ed-8e5e-4120-848f-a8b4987d588f&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=750&PageID=367>.

Grade Five Sample Test Items for Mathematics

The sample test items below represent the kinds of passages and questions that grade five students at different levels of achievement would likely answer correctly. For example, a student at the “Standard Nearly Met” achievement level would typically receive and correctly answer an item associated with that achievement level.

Grade Five Sample Test Item—Communicating Reasoning

Achievement Level: Standard Nearly Met

The art teacher gives stickers to the 96 students in her classes. She has 264 stickers to give out. She gives out one sticker at a time to each of her students until the stickers are all gone. How many students get more than 2 stickers?

- A 36
- B 72
- C 82
- D 96

Grade Five

Area**Communicating Reasoning**

Demonstrating ability to support mathematical conclusions

Standard(s)

Find whole-number quotients of whole numbers with up to four-digit dividends and two-digit divisors, using strategies based on place value, the properties of operations, and/or the relationship between multiplication and division. Illustrate and explain the calculation by using equations, rectangular arrays, and/or area models.

Answer

B

Grade Five Sample Test Item—Concepts & Procedures

Achievement Level: Standard Met

Jonas has a file cabinet in the shape of a right rectangular prism.

- The area of the base of the file cabinet is 450 square inches.
- The height of the file cabinet is 53 inches.

Enter the volume, in cubic inches, of the file cabinet.

← → ↶ ↷ ✖

1	2	3
4	5	6
7	8	9
0	.	$\frac{\square}{\square}$

Area**Concepts & Procedures**

Applying mathematical concepts and procedures

Standard(s)

Relate volume to the operations of multiplication and addition and solve real world and mathematical problems involving volume.

Answer

23850

Glossary

accessibility supports and accommodations

Tools and supports that help students access the test questions so they can best demonstrate what they know and are able to do. The Smarter Balanced tests include:

- **Universal Tools** available to all students based on their preference. These include online tools such as highlighting, digital notepads, and zooming in and out as well as other supports like scratch paper or breaks between test sections.
- **Designated Supports** available for a student when an educator or support team determines a special need. These include such tools as color contrast or masking as well as language supports for English learners, such as translated test directions or bilingual glossaries.
- **Accommodations** specially identified for students with IEPs or 504 plans. These include online tools, such as text-to-speech, closed captioning, and on-screen ASL translation as well as other supports, such as read aloud or use of a scribe.

achievement level

A score or descriptive statement that represents how well the student knows the standards for the subject area and grade level. For the Smarter Balanced tests, there are four achievement levels labeled as Standard Exceeded, Standard Met, Standard Nearly Met, and Standard Not Met.

assessment

A term generally used to mean the same thing as test.

CAASPP

California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress, which is the new state assessment system. The CAASPP system includes tests that public school students take at the end of the school year in different subject areas and grade levels.

claim or area	Broad sets of knowledge and skills within a subject area, such as Reading within English Language Arts/Literacy or Problem Solving in Mathematics. On the Smarter Balanced tests, students will get results in key areas based on groups of test questions that measure similar or related knowledge or skills.
college and career ready	A phrase that indicates a student is leaving high school well-prepared to succeed in college and the workplace.
Common Core State Standards	Academic content standards adopted by California that describe what students should know and be able to do at each grade level in order to graduate from high school ready for college and a career. The Common Core State Standards challenge students to develop a deep understanding of subject matter, learn how to think critically, and apply what they are learning to the real world.
computer adaptive test	A test given on a computer in which the questions change or adapt on the basis of a student's answers, so each student gets a customized test. When a student answers incorrectly, the computer assigns easier or less complex questions. When a student gets answers correct, the computer gives the student harder or more complex questions.
computer-based test	A test given on a computer.
content standards	Statements of academic expectations that describe what students should know and be able to do in a subject area.
formative assessment	A process teachers use during instruction to check on student understanding.
interim assessment	A test given at regular intervals, such as a chapter test, to evaluate what students have learned.

performance task	A connected set of questions and activities, based on a theme or scenario, in which students apply their knowledge and skills to real-world problems. In the Smarter Balanced assessments, students do a performance task in English language arts/literacy and one in mathematics. The performance task includes a classroom activity, done with the teacher, to introduce vocabulary and make sure all students have basic knowledge and understanding about the topic. Students then go to the computer to read materials, respond to several shorter questions, and complete a longer essay or problem.
scale score	Each year, in each subject area, a student will get an overall score between approximately 2000 and 3000. This score represents how well a student did on the test, and it corresponds to one of four achievement levels: Standard Exceeded, Standard Met, Standard Nearly Met, and Standard Not Met.
Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium	A state-led public agency, currently supported by member states and territories, that developed new tests that align to the new Common Core State Standards and measure student progress toward college and career readiness.
STAR	The Standardized Testing and Reporting Program, the previous California assessment system that has been phased out.
summative assessment	An assessment designed to be given near the end of the school year to evaluate a student’s knowledge and skills relative to a specific set of academic standards.
test item	A question, problem, or task on a test. Test items may take different forms such as multiple choice, fill-in the blank or short answer, or constructed response (where students may write sentences or essays, or show how they solve a mathematics problem).

Appendix A: Other Assessments in the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress System

California Alternate Assessment

Students in grades three through eight and grade eleven who have significant cognitive disabilities and whose individual education program requires that an alternate test be administered are eligible to take the California Alternate Assessment (CAA) instead of the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments.

Required Assessments for Science

Students in grades five, eight, and ten continue to take the science assessments that were part of the California STAR program. These include the California Standards Test (CST); the California Modified Assessment (CMA), which can be taken by eligible students with disabilities; and the California Alternate Performance Assessment (CAPA), which may be taken by students with significant cognitive disabilities.

Optional Assessment: Reading/Language Arts

The Standards-based Test in Spanish (STS) for Reading/Language Arts is available for students in grades two through eleven who receive instruction in Spanish. This paper-based test, part of the previous STAR program, can be given to Spanish-speaking English learners who are learning language arts in Spanish and to English speakers who are learning Spanish through an immersion or dual language program.

Appendix B: Additional Resources

The links below provide additional information on the new state standards and CAASPP assessments.

Common Core State Standards

- **California Department of Education**

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/cc/ccssresourcesparents.asp>

This Web page containing information for parents and students includes links to informational fliers, videos, Web sites, and other resources.

- **California State PTA**

<http://capta.org/focus-areas/education/common-core/>

This site provides informational fliers and documents, in multiple languages, about the standards and what children are learning at each grade level.

New Assessments

- **California Department of Education**

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/ca/index.asp>

This website provides variety of resources about the CAASPP system. The Students & Parent tab includes links to videos, fact sheets, practice and training tests, and other related information.

- **California State PTA**

<http://capta.org/focus-areas/education/student-assessments/>

This site provides information about the new assessments as well as a sample student report of test results.

- **Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium**

<http://www.smarterbalanced.org/parents-students/>

This Web site, from the developers of the new ELA and mathematics tests, provides information about the new assessments, a downloadable fact sheet for parents, and links to other resources.

- **California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress**

https://login3.cloud1.tds.airast.org/student/V112/Pages/LoginShell.aspx?c=California_PT&v=112

This Web site provides access to training and practice tests that parents and students can use to experience what the new assessment is like, including how the technology works and the kinds of questions and tasks that are on the new tests.

Appendix C: Scoring Rubric and Sample Responses (Constructed Response)

This item is worth a possible two points (0, 1, or 2) and is hand scored.

Scoring Rubric

Score	Rationale
2	<p>A response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives sufficient evidence of the ability to determine/summarize the theme/lesson/author’s message/main idea, or what happens after or during a key event • Includes specific examples/details that make clear reference to the text • Adequately explains the theme/lesson/author’s message/main idea, or what happens after or during a key event with clearly relevant information based on the text
1	<p>A response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives limited evidence of the ability to determine/summarize the theme/lesson/author’s message/main idea, or what happens after or during a key event • Includes vague/limited examples/details that make reference to the text • Explains the theme/lesson/author’s message/main idea, or what happens after or during a key event with vague/limited information based on the text
0	<p>A response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives no evidence of the ability to determine/summarize the theme/lesson/author’s message/main idea, or what happens after or during a key event <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives the theme/lesson/author’s message/main idea, or what happens after or during a key event, but includes no examples or no examples/details that make reference to the text <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives the theme/lesson/author’s message/main idea, or what happens after or during a key event, but includes no explanation or no relevant information from the text

Sample responses that would earn a “0,” a “1,” and a “2” are provided on the next pages.

The scoring rubric and sample responses are based on the Grade 3 constructed response item on pages 14–16.

Sample Responses

Score: 0 Points

The main idea is there are many steps to finding how people lived.

Think like a scientist and lots of things will tell you everything from the past

The main idea of the Finding the Clues is people that go around looking in places that people lived long ago for objects are called archaeologists.

The main idea of the paragraph is how archaeologists find clues on how it was in the past.

Score: 1 Point

The main idea of this passage is what a dig is and where to find a dig. It said a dig is a place where you dig to try to find how or where people used to live. It also said digs are usually in caves, a forest, a desert, or a modern city.

The main idea of the finding the clues is where and how to find artifacts. This section talks about where to find where people lived a long time ago. It also talks about how they have to be very careful and they have to use special tools to uncover dirt and sand.

The main idea is that they go places all around the world to find clues or artifacts. They used tools like small shovels and brushes. They studied the artifacts and carefully removed them from ground. They were very helpful to the people who visit them and get info.

Score: 2 Points

The main idea of "Finding the Clues" is about a dig site, what you do at a dig site, and finding artifacts. First, a site can be in a cave, a forest, a desert, or a modern city. At the site you first have to divide the ground into sections, and then you remove dirt from each section carefully. Special tools are used such as small shovels and brushes. You also have to search each section slowly. If you find tools or a piece of pottery, you photograph it, and notes are taken. After, you remove it from the ground carefully. These objects are called artifacts. Artifacts help explain how people lived in the past.

The main idea in Finding the Clues is finding the clues how people lived in the past requires careful study. They use special tools, each section must be searched slowly if a piece of pottery or a tool is found, it is photographed and notes are taken before it is removed from the ground.